ALL of these embellishments can and should be used when practicing "the scales" (moving up and down the flute in order from bottom to top). These embellishments can easily be applied to the 5-hole NA-style flute as well.

~ Mary Youngblood

BREATH CONTROL

Breath Control is our number one embellishment! The following exercises will teach you various ways to increase, improve and fine tune your playing technique.

THE FUNDAMENTAL

When all the holes are covered/down, the fundamental is the lowest of the notes you get when you play into the flute. It is the "key" the flute is in. (A, G, D, F#, etc). The top fundamental is the higher note (when all of your fingers are up, except the 3rd hole from the top), but one octave higher.

RIGHT- OR LEFT-HANDED

Standard, classical, woodwind instruments are taught and played with the left hand on the top, and the right hand on the bottom. Many of you have learned the other way around, or are naturally left-handed. Although we'll not ask you to change that (unless you're comfortable doing so), you may have to pay closer attention to descriptions, hand positions, or details written or visually taught, but *you'll be just fine!*

THE WINDOW OF SOUND

Play each note on your flute from the bottom/lowest note (all 5 or 6 holes covered) to the top/highest note.

Play these notes from the very softest/flattest it will play, to the very loudest/sharpest that particular note will play (even to the point where the note is compromised, and sounds horrible!). This is your "window of sound." You will notice every flute and every note on every flute sounds different and has a smaller or bigger window of sound.

THE SWEET SPOT

After you get to know the "window of sound" of each flute and each note, you can begin to hear and feel when the note is in pitch. Musicians use a tuner, or another instrument to validate this (some folks have perfect pitch). And especially as you play your first note, you will get used to the air pressure it takes to make each note sound "right."

CONTRAST

Because we are playing a fairly simple instrument with one octave, and 5 or 6 holes, we need to really show the contrast in sounds on the N/A style flute: The subtle differences of the notes in terms of softer and louder or slower and faster.

TEXTURE

Webster's Dictionary 4b: *A pattern of musical sound created by tones or lines played together. Basic theme or structure.*

STAYING CLOSE TO HOME

I don't take my fingers physically far from the flute. I usually try and keep my fingers "at the ready." I keep my fingers pretty close to the holes, so I can get there quickly. This is especially important when doing the bark, or in using passing/grace notes.

FLUTTER/TRILL

Rapidly moving your finger(s) up and down over the various holes.

SLURRING

Playing notes together without any articulation.

TONGUING

Articulation of each individual note (also double & triple tonguing).

FLUTTER TONGUING

Rolling your tongue while blowing into the flute. (Like rolling your "R's" to speak another language).

LETTING THE NOTE "FALL"

I visualize a shooting star, dissipating smoothly into the horizon. Get a good solid note going, then lessen the breath until the note seems to disappear. . . .

THE BARK

I use visualization on this one (the "flat-line" visual).

Using one single, big breath, and having all your fingers down, blow air through the flute, (finding the "sweet spot") then lifting up the bottom three fingers (at the SAME TIME!), thrust/blow a *huge*

amount of breath through the flute. The force should make the flute almost shriek--reaching those very highest registers of sound. Then I come back to the same "sweet spot" IMMEDIATELY, as if I had never left that original note. This embellishment takes *lots* of breath control.

VIBRATO

(This is one of the more advanced embellishments). Pushing and lessening the breath to form smooth waves of sound. *I choose to teach the classical style of vibrato, using my diaphragm. Traditionally,* many players use a throat vibrato. There is no wrong way to use vibrato! And be very patient with yourself: Each flute and individual note will react and sound very differently. (I also use visualization on this embellishment).

CHIRP

A smaller, softer version of The Bark.

FLIP UP

Holding the fundamental (bottom note) for a few dramatic seconds, then lightly releasing all the fingers except the 3rd hole, so you lightly hit the top fundamental note. Usually done at the end of a musical sentence.

BENDING THE NOTE

I personally, usually only use my index fingers while "bending the notes." This is because these fingers offer more me more "control" over the bends. *I either roll my finger off, or slide it off the* hole. This technique can be done slowly and dramatically, or quickly, for a blues- or jazz-style bending of the note. In doing this embellishment, be mindful of the "contrast" you intend to bring to the musical sentences you create. A more advanced technique is adding more air pressure to the "center" of this bend, to create more "texture."

HALF-HOLING NOTE

Covering only half of a hole to obtain the half note between whole notes, or the quarter notes between half notes. (More advanced).

PASSING NOTES/GRACE NOTES

I consistently use my top, left index finger to present what I call a "smidgeon" of a note before an actual note played. Just a "hint"of a note prior to landing on an intended note. It's to be played very quickly. Sometimes, it's almost unnoticeable. . . .

THE "ANDERSON ATTACK"

Ian Anderson, from the band Jethro Tull, has this unique technique of almost spitting these huge amounts of air through the classical flute that sound like this enormous, spitting wind, but with tonality. I've attempted to emulate this technique for the NA-style flute and credit him for introducing me to this unique, textural, and *bigger than life* embellishment!

I literally take my mouth a little bit away from the sound hole, and almost 'spit' air in and around the sound hole. Sometimes it can be a whisper of sound, and at other times, a passionate, windy breath with more tone. And I always "tongue" the notes and air I spit into the flute. It gives the embellishment texture as well as creating a really interesting, intense sound. Ian Anderson also incorporates rolling his ("R's") tongue throughout this embellishment, which I hear as, and would title, **THE GROWL**. . . .

THE HIDDEN NOTE

If your flute does *not* have the four directional holes at the bottom of the flute (symbolic &/or decorative): If you place the end of the flute close to your knee (sit for this one, or use a friend's shoulder!) and slowly cover the hole with your knee/friend's shoulder. In this way, you can get almost a full note below the fundamental. At the very least, a half note below, thus being a hidden and fun *note to use*!

MODE 1 (6-hole flutes)

Playing the scale from the bottom to the top, leaving the 3rd hole from the top covered.

MODE 4 (6-hole flutes)

Playing the scale from the bottom to the top, leaving the 4th hole from the top covered. (It's almost like having two flutes/scales in one!).

BREATH CONTROL EXCERCISES

(Using the basic scale). Starting from the bottom fundamental (low), and moving towards the top *fundamental (high), as smoothly and as quickly as you can, count how many "reps" you can do (going* from the bottom, to the top and BACK) in one single breath.

This exercise is wonderful for the continual building of breath control. Make it fun and have a friend count, or use it as a friendly competition!

If you have access to a swimming pool, make it a competition of seeing how far or how many times you can swim underwater from one end of the pool to the other.

Learn to circular breath with the didge . . . LOL!

PRACTICING

Practice is good. Hone your craft and your passion. Play, learn, grow. . . . I will reiterate: All of these embellishments can be used with the scales, so work on the things you want to get better at. Play with others, be disciplined; but my number one rule is: *HAVE FUN*! When you get tired, put the flute down. It will call to you again. These are not our old-school music lessons! This is about the *journey . . . (but practice is still GOOD!).*

VISUALIZATION

Before I start to play a song in concert, you will usually see me close my eyes, and take a cleansing breath before I start to play. Then I go away. I take myself someplace beautiful and/or meaningful. Always someplace I've been before, that touched my heart and my visual memory: Watching an eagle soaring above the redwoods in Northern California; listening to jazz with the top down; driving through the Smokey Mountains; watching humpbacks on my ancestral land on Nuchek Island, Alaska; looking out from the Pyramid of the Moon in Peru; to listening to the birds in my own backyard; or kayaking the lakes and rivers near my home. I picture those beautiful places, and try to bring that memory back to my audience in the form of a song.

GETTING OUT OF YOUR HEAD

Like myself, most of you have raised your kids, built your careers, and have had considerable life experiences under your belt. You are spiritually-minded, lovers of nature and music, and are ready to embark on *another* journey. . . it's our time!

You'll soon discover that this amazing instrument will take you to places you've never been before. From composing and/or playing in front of others, to playing for your communities, perhaps for someone transitioning, or for a grandchild or child's classroom. Maybe your church, social groups, or perhaps a wedding or memorial. Even if you're playing to the critters in your own backyard. . . .

Most of us have had to be very task-oriented, so it's challenging to get outside of ourselves--our heads--so we can become that vessel, and an instrument for our intentions.

Close your eyes. Pretend everyone/everything listening is just a friend sitting with you in your living room.

I always ask that a song *touch someone's heart.* I don't play for myself, but for someone *else* (sometimes that's easier to do). Take the focus away from YOU or any fear you may have about playing. Get out of ego. Take yourself to that sacred place in your mind, as you remember we're all simply vessels, so follow your heart. . . .

NEGATIVE SPACE

Many players believe they must fill all the space with sound. As a visual artist, I understand that the *negative spaces,* or holes without subject/sound, add "texture" and a level of completeness and resolution to any composition. This is especially important when dueting, as you must leave space for your partner to fill with his or her sound, and musical sentences and phrases. And even when playing *together, you should allow space for nothingness . . . a pause. Don't be too "busy."* Leave some open space, which will give your piece a fullness, maturity, and dramatic flair.

DUETING

Playing well with others. Developing an unspoken musical experience with another player. Some *dueting styles incorporate a "call and response" technique which gives each player time to "strut their* stuff" and contribute to the overall vibe of the song, while at the same time, creating some structure in

the musical sentences of bantering back and forth. In jazz we call this "trading eights." The more one plays duets with others, the more one gets a sense of "how" to do this. It simply takes time and practice.

SHARING THE STAGE

This segues from the last subject of dueting as, in order to play well with others, you must develop a musical sensitivity, if you will, so as to "feel" out how to best share the musical experience with others. Perhaps even others whom you have never played with before. It requires active listening skills, and the ability to be in the moment, and "go with the flow. . . ." Setting ego aside for the continuity of the overall performance. For example, often I am performing somewhere where the opening act has the bigger/louder sound. Perhaps it is just myself and my guitarist, where the opening act has a 5-piece ensemble! So for the fluidity of the show, I will usually suggest that I open the show, and the other band plays second, so the overall concert has a nice flow. "It's all good" is my motto in those situations.

CALL AND RESPONSE

One person leads with a strong musical sentence, and the other player responds in kind, but perhaps changing a *little something* in that sentence.

This should "tie into" the composition somehow, with the *other* person's musical sentence. Players can use non-verbal communication to decide who takes the lead, and who follows. This is interchangeable throughout the composition, and is recommended, so as to make the song interesting, by incorporating and showcasing both players' playing styles!

THE OVERBLOW

If you "over blow," or play the bottom fundamental with a lot of breath, some flutes will give you a couple of extra notes above the fundamental. I do this covering ALL the holes and blowing pretty darn hard. Sometimes these extra notes are in pitch, others are not there at all. You will have to experiment with this, and see what other fun surprises your particular flute has in store for you!

May Creator Bless your Flute Journey. . . .

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